

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 04347 301726Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-12 HA-05 SAA-01 SSM-03
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 OMB-01 TRSE-00
/099 W

-----020669 301730Z /42

P R 300718Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8987
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4347

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI, MASS, LE, US
SUBJ: SYRIAN APPROACH TO LEBANESE ARMY

REF: STATE 187473

1. THE SYRIANS ARE VERY UNHAPPY WITH CURRENT EFFORTS TO REBUILD THE LEBANESE ARMY AND BELIEVE THAT SARKIS MISSED THE BOAT BY REFUSING TO USE THE EXTRAORDINARY POWERS HE HAD TO FORCE THE RESIGNATIONS OF LEBANESE OFFICERS HEAVILY INVOLVED IN FIGHTING ON ONE OR ANOTHER SIDE DURING THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR. SYRIA'S CONCERN TO HAVE A WHOLLY NEW LEBANESE ARMY IN TERMS OF SECTARIAN BALANCE AND NEUTRALITY TOWARD THE VARIOUS POLITICAL FACTIONS WAS EVIDENCED BY ITS ATTEMPTS, EVEN DURING THE CIVIL WAR, TO BUILD THE "VANGUARD" UNITS IN THE BEKAA AND ITS SUMMARY ARRESTS AND IMPRISONMENT OF LT. AHMAD KHATIB AND SEVERAL OF HIS FELLOW LAA OFFICERS.

2. SYRIANS INVOLVED IN SHAPING AND IMPLEMENTING THEIR COUNTRY'S POLICY IN LEBANON SEE THE PRESENT LEBANESE ARMY COM-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 04347 301726Z

MAND STRUCTURE AS LITTLE MORE THAN A RETURN TO THE STATUS QUO WHICH MADE THE PREVIOUS ARMY FALL APART WHEN FRANGIEH AND CHAMOUN TRIED TO MANIPULATE IT FOR THEIR OWN POLITICAL ENDS. THEIR FEARS ARE BORNE OUT BY THE OCCUPATION OF ALMOST ALL KEY COMMAND POSITIONS BY CHRISTIANS AND MORE SPECIFICALLY, CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS, AND THE RESULTING DISGRUNTLEMENT OF HIGH-LEVEL MUSLIM

AND DRUZE OFFICERS WHO HAVE SENIOR POSITIONS BUT EXERCISE LITTLE REAL AUTHORITY.

3. DESPITE THIS UNHAPPINESS, SYRIANS SEEM TO BE TAKING THE ATTITUDE THAT LITTLE CAN BE DONE FOR NOW TO CHANGE THE BASIC STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION OF THE ARMY. THEY CONTINUE TO URGE BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY DEPLOYMENT OF AT LEAST SOME TOKEN LAF UNITS TO THE UNIFIL ZONE. REPORTS THAT THE LAF WILL NOW DEPLOY ALONG THE LINES OF SYRIA'S PROPOSALS WILL HELP THE LAF IMAGE HERE. IN VIEW OF THIS AND THEIR ALREADY STRONG CONCERN THAT THE ARMY IS AGAIN BECOMING A MARONITE PRESERVE, IT WOULD BE SURPRISING IF THE SYRIANS WERE EMBARKED ON A SYSTEMATIC POLICY OF DISCOURAGING MUSLIMS FROM JOINING THE ARMY, ALTHOUGH IT MAY WELL BE THAT ANTI-LF POLITICAL AND MILITIA LEADERS DO NOT WANT THEIR FOLLOWERS TO JOIN WHAT THEY VIEW AS A CHRISTIAN-DOMINATED FORCE. REPORTS FROM PPS LEADER ABDALLAH SAADED AND OTHERS SEEM TO INDICATE THAT POLITICAL SCREENING OF NEW RECRUITS IS UNFAIRLY BIASED IN FAVOR OF THOSE WHO FOUGHT WITH THE LEBANESE FRONT DURING THE CIVIL WAR.

4. AS FOR GENERAL KHOURY, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE SYRIANS RESENT HIS RALLYING OF THE LF FORCES DURING THE CIVIL WAR AGAINST THE LEFTISTS AND PALESTINIANS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 DAMASC 04347 301726Z

AT CHEKKA SINCE THIS WAS IN LINE WITH THEN CURRENT SYRIAN POLICY. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE INCIDENTS AT FAYADIYYA IN FEBRUARY 1978, ALTHOUGH GONE, ARE NOT FORGOTTEN HERE. KHOURY'S FAILURE TO ACT DECISIVELY AND BRING CHARGES AGAINST ANY OF HIS OFFICERS (REGARDLESS OF HOW POLITICALLY UNREALISTIC THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN) AND HIS UNWILLINGNESS OR INABILITY TO OPEN UP THE COMMAND STRUCTURE TO SECTS OTHER THAN HIS OWN HAVE PROBABLY NOT ENDEARED HIM TO THE SYRIANS, BUT WE NEITHER HAVE HEARD NOR SEEN ANY REPORTS WHICH INDICATE THE SYRIANS HAVE EVEN TRIED TO DUMP HIM. HE WILL BE JUDGED NOW ON HOW WELL HIS FORCES EXECUTE THEIR MOVE SOUTH (ASSUMING THEY DO SO).
PELLETREAU

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DEMARCHE, MILITARY PERSONNEL, PERSONNEL RESIGNATIONS, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978DAMASC04347
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780312-0783
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978075/aaaaadzr.tel
Line Count: 108
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: ceddf071-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 187473
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1977382
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SYRIAN APPROACH TO LEBANESE ARMY
TAGS: MILI, MASS, LE, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/ceddf071-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014